

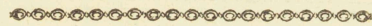


Dillaphus scurea.

Enligned by J. Sowerby Sept. 1. 1794.

DIDELPHIS SCIUREA.

THE SQUIRREL OPOSSUM.



CHARACTER GENERICUS.

Folliculus abdominalis mammarum.

CHARACTER SPECIFICUS.

Didelphis hypochondriis prolixis volitans, supra cana, subtus nivea, cauda villosissima prehensili, apicem versus nigra.

GENERIC CHARACTER.

An abdominal *pouch* or *follicle* in which the mammæ are situated, and which serves as a temporary residence for the young.

SPECIFIC CHARACTER.

Grey Opossum, snow-white beneath, with lateral flying membrane and extremely villous prehensile tail, black towards the extremity.

IN its general aspect this animal has so much the appearance of a squirrel, that on a cursory view it might readily pass for such. A more exact inspection into its characters will however evince it to be a genuine Opossum. Its size is nearly that of a common squirrel, but on account of the fulness and particular growth of the fur (which, like that of the Lemur, grows in a sub-erect manner), it appears somewhat larger. Its general colour is exactly that of the *Sciurus cinereus* or American Grey Squirrel. A black stripe passes over each eye along the top of the head: under each ear is a black patch surrounded with white; the hair on the white part having a more soft or flocculent appearance than the black. The tail (which is prehensile) is of the same colour with the body for about half its length, the remainder being black. It is very full of hair, and tapers a little towards the extremity, but without any acute termination. The eyes are black, round, and full. The ears round, shortish, and very thin. The whole under side of the animal is milk-white. The upper parts of

the feet are also white, and the edge of the lateral or flying membrane, which extends from the fore feet to the hind, is edged with a blackish border as in the flying squirrels. The abdominal pouch is of considerable size, and is situated, as in other opossums, on the lower part of the abdomen. The hind feet are furnished with a rounded, unarmed, or mutic thumb. Nothing can exceed the softness and delicacy of this animal's fur, which is, if possible, still finer than that of the *Petaurus* of New Holland described in the Naturalist's Miscellany, and to which indeed, though very greatly inferior in size, as well as widely differing in colour, it bears a striking affinity. I must also add, that I have great reason for supposing the *Petaurus* to be furnished with an abdominal pouch; a particular which I have not yet been able to ascertain; no living specimens having been yet imported. The Opossum now described is a nocturnal animal, and continues torpid during the greatest part of the day, but during the night is full of activity. In this, as well as in other Australian Didelphides, the two toes on the hind feet nearest the thumb or rounded one, are connate, or both conjoined under one common skin. The plate represents it nearly in its natural size.